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HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OF

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

LOS ANGELES, 1893.

PRESIDENT'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

E. W. JONES.

[Delivered January 9, 1893.]

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In what I am about to say I assume no superior wisdom. Mind you, I am required by the by-laws to suggest to you tonight what I think the society should do during the coming year; that is one excuse to offer, and another is my intense desire to see this society take a high and prominent stand as an educating and enlightening influence in this community.

I doubtless shall suggest nothing new to any of you, and shall be as terse and brief as possible.

Without further ado, then, I wish to urge that the work of this society should hereafter be almost altogether in the field of history. Our society has heretofore had other subjects for consideration; especially has it made scientific subjects prominent in its deliberations. But now, that a scientific society of considerable prominence has been formed here, let us relegate those matters mainly to the care of that body, especially such of them as are entirely foreign to the realm of history. As it may properly come within our province to deal with the history of our plants and animals, our rocks and fossils, to some extent—as well as that of our people—so we are necessarily thrown, more or less, into contact with scientific questions; further than this, however, we should, I think, turn over to the Scientific Society all subjects properly pertaining to it. Let that body make history for ours to transcribe and enter on the general roll in its proper order; and let this one, from now on, devote itself especially to gathering together the material for a history of this region and community. The labor and its result will be unique. There is no account, so far

as I know, of its ever having been done, or of its being done today anywhere else, and yet, among chroniclers, the complaint is always that contemporaneous testimony, intelligent and abundant, is so scarce. Let us begin to prepare a record of the origin, rise and progress of all our important enterprises. The material can be had from those who own or conduct them, and from their advertisements, pamphlets, circulars and from personal observation and authentic report.

Not long ago a wonderful event occurred among us, affecting especially the region in and about Los Angeles. It could not have been more wonderful, nor of greater benefit to us, had a shower of precious stones and coined gold—like manna to the Israelites in the desert—to the value of millions descended among our people, and yet it has almost passed out of recollection; no account has been written of it; its particulars and details are fast being lost beyond recovery. An army “like which the populous North poured never from her frozen loins” and to which Xerxes’ Persian hosts were a handful; like the sands of the sea, for multitude, was devastating our terrestrial paradise, and the ingenuity of man found no means to stay its progress. A courier was dispatched around the world to see if beneficent Mother Nature herself could not furnish some remedy, some power to save her suffering children. He returned, and brought to our relief a little company of mail-clad warriors in scarlet and black, and the enemy, ten thousand to one, melted away before them like snow flakes under a summer sun. Who will write the wonderful story of the great war between the *Vedalia Cardinalis* and the *Icerya Purchasi*?

The story of the terrible blight that destroyed many of our vineyards should be written; the story of the growth of our wine, brandy and raisin industries, of our citrus orchards, of our fruit industries generally—all should be written and made as complete as possible. We should also keep a correct record of local current events. Diaries kept with that object in view would hereafter be invaluable from a historical point of view. The brightest glimpses of the time in which our ancestors lived are given by some of the diaries then written. There is scarcely anything that transpires within our experience that is not worth making a note of when possible. Let the man who erects a building and he who buries a friend, or he who plants a tree, write the story of the event, and, with a coin or other token, seal it in glass and place it where, beneath the wall or in the grave, it will make its revelation to the future discoverer.

The complete history of a people cannot be written without delineating their character, and their character cannot be shown

except by describing the things which are of trivial, as well as of vital, importance and interest to them. It is only within the present that these minor matters can be correctly and accurately described. I therefore especially urge attention to local, civil, social, religious and political contemporaneous history.

Says one writer : " History reposes on contemporary witness of the fact related ;" and again, " History only attains its full stature when it not only records, but describes in considerable fulness, social events and evolution."

Our field of research in ancient history is not as interesting as one of an older population, but still it is one offering considerable reward to the worker, and I would not suggest that it be neglected. With regard to our people, the races, nations and communities from which they were derived will be matters of much future interest. Our Committee on Ethnology, I hope, will see something profitable in that direction to occupy its time, as well in the modern as in the more ancient phases of its subject.

Our Committee on Archæology has an ever widening realm to explore. The vestiges and relics of the earliest life of this region, human and otherwise, are constantly being brought to light in increasing quantities. In geology and meteorology our domain of investigation is always practically unlimited.

" The proper study of mankind is man." It is the best way in which he can study his Maker—the all comprising theme. From man's acts we detect his motives, as well as from the events which generate those motives. We can not be accurate in our knowledge of him, unless we know accurately what happens to and is done by him. By the lessons of history much of his conduct is guided ; the lessons of his own experience and that of others. Without those lessons we can imagine how unfortunate his condition would be ; like that of apes in tropical forests—creatures of instinct only. Had these lessons been more thorough and accurate heretofore, he would be much better off than he is today.

Another matter to which I wish to urge the attention of the society is the collection of materials for a museum and library. This society can do much to save for our own people the material that we all know is so rapidly being taken from us ; there are among us many large and small collections and isolated pieces of Indian relics, fabrics and other remains, of fossils, petrifications and curiosities of many varieties ; many manuscripts, documents, maps, portraits, pictures, weapons, tools, implements, ornaments, decorations and costumes ; many curious botanical, geological, conchological, entomological and archæological collections and specimens, which

ought to be held for the benefit of our own country. They are being carried off in large quantities, mostly to arrest a passing notice in a rich man's galleries, or to load the shelves of some great public curiosity shop, far from the home where they would be loved and appreciated. The raiders, who carry them away, get praise for their enterprise and intelligence, and the people who permit them to be taken get the opposite kind of a compliment. It is lately reported that the purchase of a very rich collection in our vicinity has been made for the purpose of enriching the collection of a great State 2,000 miles away. It is to be shown to all the world at Chicago next summer, to the great glory of others and not at all to ours. Another collection, close by, is being bargained for to go away across the continent, and how many more will meet a like fate, unless the foray is stopped, we can imagine. I hope that this society will devote a great share of its energies to securing and retaining these treasures, especially that part of them which has any sort of historical interest. Let this society take up the work of cataloguing, or at least making a list, of all the collections and isolated specimens of historical, literary, artistic, scientific, or curious interest in Southern California, and appoint a strong committee for the task. I know of no one way in which it can aid in the establishment of a museum here to better advantage. There can be no doubt that there is enough material here to stock an institution worthy of an educational center. Object lessons are the best of all means of instruction. With young and old they appeal to the intelligence more vividly and lastingly than any other form of lessons. Each object in a well provided museum furnishes a many sided lesson, and illustrates some phase of existence. And such an institution should be provided for every central community, and made available and accessible to the whole people; nothing approaches a good museum for furnishing object lessons. A part of the public school fund should be devoted to the building up of such an institution; the Public Library should be associated with it. The worth of a school, whose silent teachers exemplify facts in every branch of science and art, that demonstrate the wonders of Nature, that illustrate the progress of our race from its birth, and the character and vicissitudes of the Earth, our Mother, is beyond all estimation.

I suggest that this organization ask the co-operation of the Science Association, the Board of Public Library Directors, the Board of Education, the school teachers of the city and country, and all this section of the State, and all other good citizens in a harmonious effort to establish a Southern California Museum. Grant to each his share of the glory of the result; let all the bodies participating meet and select a board of intelligent and responsible citizens as per-

manent trustees ; let them co-operate with that board in securing a suitable building. The building for the purpose should be centrally located and fire-proof. It should be adapted, if possible, to the purposes of a public library also. When the building is provided for, if that can be at not too late a date, there will be no difficulty in filling it with objects which will attract and instruct multitudes, old and young—our own people as well as others—others as well as our citizens.

At the next tax levy a sum should be provided, both by the City Council and the Board of Supervisors, for the construction of the building ; it is a common cause and will be a common pride of our people.

I have devoted this address to the especial advocacy of effort in two fields of labor, viz:—Southern California History and the establishment of a museum. The regular committee work in other specific lines need not be hindered, and, indeed, should only tend to the same end.

In the first field, historical treasure, inestimable and incomparable, up to this date, so far as I know, can be laid up ; and, by the second, a great educational treasury and power-house can be constructed, where the rich collections of the different societies, and those loaned to them, will be as safe as possible from loss. By the trusteeship suggested, the material will be in the best hands, and beyond the power of mercenary persons to make use of for their own selfish purposes. As it is now, such persons may, at any time, get control of this society, and appropriate or dispose of its property, as has already been done.

This state of affairs can not be too soon remedied ; nothing can impair our usefulness like want of confidence in our ability to protect and preserve the articles entrusted to us. Such a trust is a sacred one, and in many cases it is far more so than that of money, or anything that money can purchase.

There may be other plans better than I have suggested. I earnestly hope, having a deep and abiding interest in the welfare of the society, that some course will be soon taken by which the Historical Society of Southern California will merit and attain the high position among our highest institutions, which it ought to occupy.